

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 ATHENS 3197

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, GR, OVIP(CARAMANLIS, CONSTANTINE)

SUBJECT: THE NEW DEMOCRACY HALKIDIKI "PRE-CONTRESS": WHAT
DID IT MEAN?

REF: A. ATHENS 3066, B. ATHENS 3130 C. ATHENS 3142

1. SUMMARY. "THE NEW DEMOCRACY PARTY WILL BE GREECE'S
BACKBONE FOR A LONG TIME," PRIME MINISTER CARAMANLIS PREDICTED
TO A GATHERING OF THE ND PARTY WHICH HELD ITS FIRST MAJOR CON-
VOCATION APRIL 2-4 IN HALKIDIKI. OVER 1,800 DELEGATES WERE
PRESENT TO HEAR EXHORTATIONS BY THE PRIME MINISTER, BY THE
THREE MINISTERS CONSIDERED HIS POSSIBLE HEIRS-APPARENT, BY
THE PRESIDENT OF THE PARLIAMENT AND OTHER PROMINENT FIGURES.
OSTENSIBLY, THE CENTRAL PURPOSE OF THE MEETING, WAS TO INITIATE
THE PROCESS OF BUILDING AN INSTITUTIONALIZED POLITICAL PARTY
FREED FROM DEPENDENCE, AS HAS REPEATEDLY OCCURRED IN THE PAST,
ON PERSONALITY CULTS. BUT THERE MAY HAVE BEEN OTHER CONSIDERATIONS
INVOLVED IN HOLDING THE HALKIDIKI RALLY. ALTHOUGH THE DUST HAS
NOT YET SETTLED, IT IS WORTHWHILE TO ASK JUST WHAT THE EVENT
SIGNIFIED, AND WHETHER CARAMANLIS' PREDICTION, IN VIEW OF PAST
PERFORMANCE, IS INDEED VALID. END SUMMARY.

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2. THE MAJORITY NEW DEMOCRACY PARTY (ND) HELD ITS FIRST NATIONAL
ASSEMBLY, OR "PRE-CONGRESS" APRIL 2-4. AN ESTIMATED 1,800-2,000
DELEGATES--REPRESENTING MEMBERS OF THE CABINET, THE PARTY'S
PARLIAMENTARY DEPUTIES, UNSUCCESSFUL CANDIDATES FOR PARLIAMENT
IN 1974, AND OFFICIALS FROM THE ND'S REGIONAL AND LOCAL ORGANIZATIONS

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GATHERED AT A RESORT COMPLEX IN HALKIDIKI IN NORTHERN GREECE TO HEAR THEIR LEADERS EXTOL THE ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF THE PAST TWO AND A HALF YEARS, DEBATE THE PARTY'S FUTURE AND PREPARE FOR THEIR FIRST NATIONAL CONGRESS EXPECTED TO TAKE PLACE LATER THIS YEAR.

3. THE ND PARTY WAS HASTILY FORMED IN THE OCTOBER-NOVEMBER 1974 PERIOD FOR THE FIRST ELECTIONS AFTER THE JUNTA YEARS. AND WHILE IT DREW MANY SUPPORTERS FROM THE FOLLOWERS OF THE FORMER CARAMANLIS NATIONAL RADICAL UNION PARTY (ERE), ND EMERGED, NEVERTHELESS, AS A NEW GROUPING CONSISTING OF A BROAD SPECTRUM OF CONSERVATIVES, SOME LIBERALS, AND A SMATTERING OF OTHERS WHO JOINED TOGETHER UNDER THE LEADERSHIP OF CONSTANTINE CARAMANLIS, "THE MAN OF THE HOUR" WHEN THE JUNTA COLLAPSED.

4. ND WAS THE UNDISPUTED VICTOR IN THE NOVEMBER 1974 ELECTIONS, WINNING 54.4 PERCENT OF THE VOTE, THE LARGEST MAJORITY IN CONTEMPORARY GREEK POLITICAL HISTORY. THIS VOTE REPRESENTED THE ELECTORATE'S OVERWHELMING PREFERENCE FOR CONSTANTINE CARAMANLIS AS THE NATIONAL LEADER TO GUIDE GREECE FROM DICTATORSHIP TO DEMOCRACY. IT DID NOT, HOWEVER, SIGNIFY AN ENDORSEMENT OF THE ND AS A POLITICAL INSTITUTION OR AS AN INDEPENDENT IDEOLOGICAL MOVEMENT.

5. AFTER MORE THAN TWO AND A HALF YEARS, ND HAS CHANGED LITTLE FROM BEING AN ESSENTIALLY CENTER-CONSERVATIVE COALITION WOVEN ABOUT THE FIGURE OF CARAMANLIS; IN OTHER WORDS THE TRADITIONAL GREEK PARTY BASED ON PERSONALITY. MOREOVER, THE PARTY ORGANIZATION REMAINS LARGELY A PAPER STRUCTURE. SO MUCH SO THAT A SURPRISING NUMBER OF DEPUTIES IN THE PARLIAMENT HAD VIRTUALLY NO CONTACT

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WITH THE PARTY ORGANIZATION AND WERE NOT EVEN ACQUAINTED WITH DIRECTOR GENERAL GEORGE MISSAILIDES, THE TOP ADMINISTRATIVE FIGURE. CARAMANLIS HAD OCCASIONALLY IN THE PAST SPOKEN OF THE NEED FOR THE SURVIVAL OF GREEK DEMOCRACY TO HAVE GENUINE PARTIES BASED ON COMMON IDEOLOGIES, WHICH COULD SURVIVE IRRESPECTIVE OF THEIR PRESENT LEADERSHIP. BUT IN PRACTICE, HE DID LITTLE TO INSTILL LIFE INTO THIS OWN ND PARTY.

6. THUS, THE HALKIDIKI GATHERING REPRESENTS THE FIRST STEP IN FORMALIZING THE PARTY STRUCTURE WHICH UNTIL NOW HAS OPERATED PRETTY MUCH ON A PROVISIONAL, AD HOC BASIS. AS A RESULT, A DRAFT CONSTITUTION HAS BEEN READIED AND OPERATING RULES DRAWN UP FOR RATIFICATION BY THE NATIONAL CONGRESS LATER THIS YEAR. AND A GENERAL PARTY "PLATFORM" WAS ACCLAIMED WHICH CONSISTS OF SIX BASIC PRINCIPLES: 1) ALLEGIANCE TO THE NATIONAL INTEREST OF GREECE; 2) BELIEF IN PARLIAMENTARY DEMOCRACY AS A FORM OF GOVERNMENT; 3) FAITH IN SOCIAL JUSTICE FOR ALL GREEK CITIZENS; 4) ADHERENCE TO A FREE, DEMOCRATIC ECONOMY WITH A ROLE FOR STATE INTERVENTION WHEN NECESSARY; 5) DEDICATION TO

THE PEACEFUL CO-EXISTENCE OF NATIONS, WITH GREECE LOCATED IN THE DEMOCRATIC WEST; AND 6) BELIEF IN THE CULTURAL FUTURE OF GREECE WHICH WILL ASSURE THE COUNTRY'S PLACE IN THE COMMUNITY OF NATIONS. AND INTERESTINGLY ENOUGH, WHILE THE PLATFORM ITSELF APPEARS INNOCUOUSLY PROGRESSIVE, IT DOES NOT PORTRAY THE RATHER CONSERVATIVE FEELING WHICH WAS SAID TO HAVE SURFACED DURING THE "PRE-CONGRESS". MANY OF THE PRINCIPAL SPEAKERS, PERHAPS MINDFUL OF AN EMERGING RESTLESSNESS ON THE PART OF MONARCHISTS AND OTHER CONSERVATIVES WITHIN THE PARTY AT THE COURSE OF EVENTS UNDER CARAMANLIS, REFLECTED IN A LIMITED FASHION THE WIDESPREAD CORRIDOR SENTIMENT WHICH REPORTEDLY WAS STRONGLY IN FAVOR OF A MORE DETERMINED EFFORT AGAINST WHAT THEY CONTEND IS GROWING STRENGTH OF THE LEFT.

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CORRECTED COPY FOR TEXT

7. ALSO AT HALKIDIKI, DIRECTOR GENERAL MISSALIDES WAS INTRODUCED TO ND'S STALWARTS AND PROJECTED AS A POSITIVE FACTOR IN THE PARTY, A PERSON PREPARED AND READY TO ASSIST BOTH THE NATIONAL LEADERSHIP AS WELL AS THE LOCAL PARTY ORGANIZATION. IN THIS GENERAL SENSE THEN, THE FORMAL STRUCTURE OF THE PARTY, WHILE STILL IN THE PRELIMINARY STAGES, TOOK TWO IMPORTANT STEPS FORWARD. THE MEETING WAS HISTORIC IN THAT IT TOOK PLACE AT ALL, AND SECONDLY THE IDEOLOGICAL TENETS AND THE ORGANIZATIONAL ELEMENTS HAVE BEEN PREPARED, READIED FOR RATIFICATION WHENEVER THE NATIONAL CONGRESS CONVENES.

8. BUT PERHAPS THE MOST NOTICEABLE ACHIEVEMENT WAS THE UPLIFT TO MORALE AT ALL LEVELS PROVIDED BY THE HALKIDIKI EXPERIENCE. THAT THE ALMOST 2,000 ND STALWARTS WERE ABLE TO MIX TOGETHER IN RELATIVE ISOLATION AND, FOR ONCE, EXCHANGE THOUGHT AND IDEAS FREELY AMONG THEMSELVES GAVE A MUCH NEEDED SENSE OF INVOLVEMENT AND PARTICIPATION THROUGHOUT THE RANKS, AN IMPORTANT FACTOR IN THIS COUNTRY WHERE EMOTION COUNTS SO HEAVILY. WHETHER
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THE EMOTIONAL HIGH WILL BE SUSTAINED AFTER THE EASTER HOLIDAYS AND BOYOND REMAINS TO BE SEEN, OF COURSE, AND WILL DEPEND A GREAT DEAL ON THE WILLINGNESS OF CARAMANLIS AND OTHER TOP FIGURES TO DEVOTE MOE OF THEIR ENERGIES TO THE PARTY WHICH THEY HAVE PREVIOUSLY TREATED WITH SOMEWHAT BENIGN NEGLECT. BUT THE POINT REGISTERED THAT THE PARTY WAS FINALLY ABLE TO MEET AS A SINGLE BODY.

9. SOME ALSO VIEW THE HALKIDIKI MEETING AS AN OPPORTUNITY FOR THE "THREE DAUPHINS", THE POSSIBLE HEIRS-APPARENT TO THE CARAMANLIS THRONE -- GEORGE RALLIS, PANAYIS PAPALIGOURAS AND EVANGHELOS AVEROFF-TO PROVE THEMSELVES BEFORE THE ND BODY. IF, INDEED, THIS IDEA OF A TESTING GROUND WERE TRUE, MOST AGREE THAT IT WAS AVEROFF WHO SHOWED HIMSELF THE BEST PERFORMER. THROUGH HIS FORMAL ADDRESS (REFTEL B) AND IN HIS GENERAL HANDLING OF HIMSELF WITH THE DELEGATES, AVEROFF'S STOCK ROSE PERCEPTIBLY ALTHOUGH PROBABLY NOT DECISIVELY. OTHERS INTERPRETED THE PROMINENT ROLE ACCORDED TO PRESIDENT OF THE PARLIAMENT, CONSTANTINE PAPACONSTANTINOU, AS SIGNIFICANT INDICATING THAT HE AND THE "THREE" WERE DESTINED TO FORM A COLLEGIATE LEADERSHIP TO SUCCEED CARAMANLIS WHEN THE TIME COMES FOR THE PRIME MINISTER TO STEP ASIDE. STILL OTHERS MAINTAIN THAT THE ND CONVOCATION WAS A PRELIMINARY STEP BY CARAMANLIS TO RALLY THE PARTY AS HE PREPARES THE TERRAIN FOR LEAVING IT TO ASCENT TO THE POSITION OF PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC. THERE WAS (AND CONTINUES TO BE) A GREAT DEAL OF SPECULATION ON THIS POINT AND ON WHETHER CARAMANLIS WILL LEAD THE ND INTO THE NEXT ELECTIONS OR, FEARFUL HE MAY NOT BE ABLE TO EQUAL HIS UNIQUE 1974 PERFORMANCE, SEEK TO RISE ABOVE THE PARTY LEADERSHIP BEFOREHAND. CARAMANLIS, OF COURSE, KEEPS HIS OWN COUNSEL, BUT THEORIES AS TO THE ELECTORAL FORECAST ARE PLENTIFUL, AND THERE IS LITTLE DOUBT THAT A "PRE-ELECTORAL" ATMOSPHERE AFFECTED MANY OF THE DELEGATES DURING THE THREE-DAY RALLY AT HALKIDIKI.

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10 CONCLUSION: IN SUM, THE "PRE-CONGRESS" MUST BE COUNTED A DEFINITE PLUS FOR THE NEW DEMOCRACY. IN THE SHORT RUN, THE PARTY HAS RECEIVED A BADLY NEEDED BOOST. MORALE WAS CERTAINLY ANHANCED, AND THE GROUNDWORK LAID FOR THE EVENTUAL DEVELOPMENT OF A GENUINE PARTY STRUCTURE. CARAMANLIS TOLD THE HEARTILY CHEERING GATHERING THAT "THE ENTHUSIASM AND SPIRITUALUNITY WHICH PREVAILED DURING THE MEETING BEAR WITNESS TO THE VITALITY AND DRIVE OF NEW DEMOCRACY... I AM LEAVING THE CONFERENCE WITH A FEELING OF GREATER STRENGTH AND FAITH THAT THE FUTURE OF THE NEW DEMOCRACY AND OF THE NATION IN GENERAL IS PROMISING." HOWEVER, IN SPITE OF HIS ENCOURAGING WORDS, IT REMAINS TO BE SEEN IF THE PRIME MINISTER AND OTHERS ARE WILLING TO ADOPT THE ESSENTIAL MEASURES TO BREATHE SUFFICIENT LIFE INTO THE ND PARTY TO MAKE IT A SELF-SUSTAINING INSTITUTION. ONLY THE FUTURE WILL TELL. BUT, RHETORIC ASIDE, TIME IS RUNNING SHORT AND PAST PERFORMANCE IS HARDLY ENCOURAGING. THE KEY QUSTION FOR GREEK DEMOCRACY STILL REMAINS: "AFTER CARAMANLIS, WHAT?" AND BECAUSE OF THE VACUUM WHICH MIGHT OCCUR DURING A TRANSITION PERIOD, MUCH DEPENDS ON THE ANSWER TO A COMPANION QUESTION, "WHITHER NEW DEMOCRACY?". KUBISCH

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